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Security Council

Sixty-eighth year

Provisional

6966th meeting
Tuesday, 14 May 2013, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Menan	(Togo)
Members:	Argentina	Mrs. Perceval
	Australia	Ms. King
	Azerbaijan	Mr. Mehdiyev
	China	Mr. Wang Min
	France	Mr. Briens
	Guatemala	Mr. Rosenthal
	Luxembourg	Ms. Lucas
	Morocco	Mr. Loulichki
	Pakistan	Mr. Masood Khan
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Sul Kyung-hoon
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Rwanda	Mr. Nduhungirehe
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Tatham
	United States of America	Mrs. DiCarlo

Agenda

The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Letter dated 3 May 2013 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2013/263)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Letter dated 3 May 2013 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2013/263)

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia to participate in this meeting.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Valentin Inzko, High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, to participate in this meeting.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Thomas Mayr-Harting, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2013/263, which contains the text of a letter dated 3 May 2013 from the Secretary-General, transmitting the forty-third report of the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

I now give the floor to Mr. Inzko.

Mr. Inzko: Allow me to begin by thanking the members of the Security Council for their continuing support and attention to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The question of Bosnia and Herzegovina does not, fortunately, have the immediate security dimensions of the other issues that the Security Council is dealing with. But I am sure that the Council will agree with me that what happens to Bosnia and Herzegovina matters far beyond its borders. Bosnia and Herzegovina is a country that in so many ways has come to symbolize our shared commitment and quest for an integrated European continent rooted in lasting peace, stability, prosperity and tolerance. As we strive to achieve that vision, we should, of course, take pride in the progress that has been made in Bosnia and Herzegovina following the tragic wars of the 1990s. But we must also recognize that the job is not yet done and that our engagement remains essential if we are to safeguard the progress made thus far and build on it to reach our common goal.

I regret to inform the Council that in the six months since my previous report (S/2012/813), Bosnia and Herzegovina's political leaders have continued to fail the citizens of the country and fell short of the very limited expectations of the international community. As a result, the country has fallen further behind its neighbours as a region. Serbia and Kosovo are normalizing relations following a historic deal negotiated by the European Union's (EU) foreign policy chief, Baroness Ashton, and Serbia appears poised to open accession talks with the European Union.

Croatia is now just seven weeks away from full membership, having served as a shining example to others in the region of what can be achieved if change is delivered through reform. Montenegro's progress is also impressive. The region is moving on, and, in seven weeks, Bosnia and Herzegovina will have 1,000 kilometres of common borders with the European Union.

Meanwhile, regrettably, Bosnia and Herzegovina is stagnating. Year after year it is let down by its political leaders, who continue to fail to reach the healthy compromises that are necessary to meet the requirements of Euro-Atlantic integration and to tackle the very serious economic and social challenges facing the country - all this despite the very generous, progressive and reinforced engagement of the EU on the ground. I should to like mention in particular the tireless efforts of European Union Special Representative Peter Sørensen.

The sad reality of Bosnia's politics was brought home again in April, when the country's leaders failed to reach agreement on the implementation of a key ruling from the European Court of Human Rights that would unlock the next stage in the EU integration process. In that regard, I should like to ask the political leaders: what should have been easier to solve — the implementation of the Sejdić-Finci human rights ruling, or the historic issue of Serbia and Kosovo?

A similar dynamic has played out over the past two years with regard to the country's NATO aspirations, where little concrete progress has been reached to register military property in the name of the State,

the requirement to unlock the country's entry into the Alliance's membership action plan. Both tasks are simple and straightforward, involve little or no material cost and could be achieved within days with a minimum of political courage and an understanding that reaching healthy compromises through political dialogue is a win-win situation for all involved. Yet the zero-sum approach to politics continues unabated year after year.

That approach must change, and it must change now if the next 16 months are not to be lost to unproductive election campaigning.

Before reviewing the main political developments of the last six months from the perspective of my mandate, I want to make clear in no uncertain terms that the fundamental reason for the country continuing to lag behind its neighbours is the fact that elected officials and political parties continue to put their own narrow personal and party political interests before the interests of the citizens and the country at large.

The fact that the pull of Euro-Atlantic integration processes has so far not proved strong enough to overcome this should be of concern to all of us and cause for serious reflection on the elements of our united strategy moving forward.

Turning now to the political developments of the last six months, it is the deepening political and constitutional crisis in the Federation, linked to a new parliamentary majority being formed in this entity, that has dominated events. Despite its majority, the new coalition, which has a clear and legitimate right to seek to reshuffle the Government, has not been able to remove the existing Government, as some parties have used constitutional blocking mechanisms that are actually designed to protect the rights of constituent peoples to block the adoption of a no-confidence vote. The crisis is further complicated by the fact that the institution responsible for resolving the blockage — the so-called Vital National Interest Panel of the Federal Constitutional Court — does not function due the four-and-a-half year failure of the competent authorities to appoint missing judges to the Panel.

As if these developments were not a serious enough distraction from the pressing difficulties facing the authorities in the Federation, the President of the Federation was arrested on 26 April and remains in detention.

The smooth reshuffling of the Republika Srpska Government in March stands in sharp contrast to the situation in the Federation. The ruling coalition in Republika Srpska elected a new Prime Minister and replaced a number of ministers, seemingly in response to a worsening economic situation, which included public sector strikes. In contrast with the Federation Government, the Republika Srpska Government has continued to meet regularly as it seeks to tackle the many economic and social challenges it is facing.

However, from the point of view of the mandate given to me under the Dayton Peace Agreement and reflected in successive Security Council resolutions, I remain deeply concerned about fundamental challenges to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina coming from some representatives of Republika Srpska, including entity President Dodik. Six months ago, I signaled that the issue of growing advocacy for the dissolution of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Republika Srpska officials deserved the special attention of the international community. My assessment in this regard has not changed. Statements made and actions taken during the reporting period, which are catalogued in my report, have in my view represented a continuation of this worrisome policy.

Just last month and again a few days ago, the Republika Srpska President said that Bosnia and Herzegovina "has absolutely no possibility to survive" and described Bosnia and Herzegovina as a

> "sufferer on its last breath, into whom the international community is still throwing capsules of oxygen claiming that it has to survive".

This is just one of many such statements cited in my report, and they have continued since this reporting period ended. Also symbolic of the retrograde politics that continues to prevail, statements denying that genocide was committed in Srebrenica have also continued.

In sharp contrast, Serbia's President Tomislav Nikolić, Prime Minister Dačić and Deputy Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić, expressing the sentiments of the Belgrade authorities, have in recent weeks shown the kind of political leadership that is worthy of the highest praise. When President Nikolić explicitly apologized for Srebrenica and other war crimes committed by individuals in the name of the Serbian State or people, he took a courageous step towards regional reconciliation that, if followed up, could open

the way to further improvements in relations between Sarajevo and Belgrade.

It is also worth noting that, upon the initiative of Turkey, a meeting is taking place today between the Presidents of Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Turkey. Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu came personally to Sarajevo last week to prepare that historic meeting. These efforts are extremely important not only to regional cooperation, but also to regional reconciliation. Of course, they enjoy my full support.

In general, I also remain concerned about a pattern of disregard for the rule of law that has emerged over the past couple of years, not least in the Federation. For this reason, I submitted a special report to the Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Council on the rule of law in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The ongoing failure of local institutions to implement the November 2010 Bosnia and Herzegovina Constitutional Court decision on Mostar's electoral system is a case in point and represents a violation of the Peace Agreement, which states that decisions of the Court shall be final and binding. As a result, residents of Mostar were unable to vote in the 2012 local elections. The two largest parties in Mostar bear most responsibility for the failure to reach an agreement, and I expect these two parties to start compromising. Perhaps not surprisingly, given the overall climate, the Bosnia and Herzegovina authorities again failed to make concrete progress on the outstanding objectives set by the Steering Board of the Peace implementation Council as prerequisites for closure of the Office of the High Representative.

Not all the news has been bad. I have already mentioned some positive aspects coming out of Republika Srpska. Additionally, the State-level Council of Ministers, which underwent a party reshuffle in November, has met regularly. The State budget for 2013 was adopted on time, for the first time in two years. In general, however, the State-level coalitions have so far been unable to deliver much needed progress on the legislative front.

A stable security situation is the starting point for everything else, and through their continued presence the European Union and NATO military missions in Bosnia and Herzegovina have both continued to reassure citizens that the country remains safe and secure, despite the difficult political situation and at a time when senior politicians have repeatedly and openly called the future of the country into question. In advance of the Security Council's deliberations in November, I would like to take this opportunity to express my strong belief that the presence of the European Union military mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina under its existing mandate is essential to support ongoing international community efforts and my ability to fulfil my civilian mandate.

Bosnia and Herzegovina's political leaders and the parties they represent are faced with a choice that is growing increasingly stark with each passing day. There can be no more excuses and there is no place for them to hide from their responsibilities. The choice is simple. They can succeed together or they can fail together. I know them all. I know that they can do much better, and I call on them from this most distinguished of stages to show the courage to finally reach the healthy compromises that will enable the country to progress.

For our part we must continue to assist those in Bosnia and Herzegovina who want the country to progress, while also standing firm against all those who seek to reopen the wounds of the past. Bosnia and Herzegovina can go forward only if it looks forward and not backwards. Accordingly, I hope that when I report to the Council in six months that we can look forward to a 2014 full of progress and not of deepening crisis. For Bosnia and Herzegovina, we need not only the continuous attention of the international community, but also patience and a long-term approach. New generations are arising and ready to commit themselves to that wonderful country.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Inzko for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to the members of the Council.

Mr. Loulichki (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): I am especially pleased to be first on the list of speakers on the subject of today's debate, and all the more so because I spent several years in Bosnia and Herzegovina. I saw the people of that country suffer. I saw them regain hope and confidence. And, immediately following the trauma of war and the destruction that it produced, I saw a country imbued with promise and tolerance and willing to put aside the past and hope for a better life.

I would like to thank Mr. Valentin Inzko, High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, for introducing his semi-annual report on the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina (S/2013/263, annex). The overall impression one comes away with from the report is one of political stalemate and an entrenchment of positions on the part of Federation partners. That has

resulted in a deterioration of the situation and creates the danger of the disintegration of the institutions put in place by the Dayton Agreement. The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina continues to experience a constitutional and political crisis at the federal and cantonal levels. That is undermining the cohesion and sovereignty of the country while endangering its territorial integrity and delaying its Euro-Atlantic integration.

On the political front, the report refers to the political power struggle that has characterized political life in Bosnia and Herzegovina and led to paralysis in the functioning of the Federation's institutions, in particular its Constitutional Court, which is so crucial for ensuring respect for the rule of law. The nationalist rhetoric and provocative statements with regard to Bosnia's institutions, as well as unilateral actions, are weakening the very foundations of the Federation and jeopardizing 17 years of painstaking achievements in building on the arrangements produced by the Dayton Agreement. At the same time, Bosnia and Herzegovina has been unable to make progress in meeting the five objectives and two conditions required in order to proceed to close the Office of the High Representative, in particular when it comes to the issue of property and the Brcko district.

Those negative trends have a direct impact on people's daily lives, as well as on improving their social and living conditions. Far from serving the long-term interests of any constituent part of the Federation, this situation is damaging to all communities in that it serves to emphasize differences, pit the various interests against one another and erode the prospects for much-desired national reconciliation.

Given that scenario, which is worrying in many ways, the holding of regular sessions of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the adoption of several budgetary and defence policy decisions, the holding of regular Council of Ministers meetings, the implementation of the results of local elections of October 2012, and the symbolic election of the first non-Bosniak mayor of Sarajevo are all reasons for hope. Those developments show that the path of compromise is viable, so long as there is political will and the rule of law is respected.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a country that emerged from a long and painful conflict that struck the conscience of the international community and permanently marked the people of this friendly country. The Dayton Agreement, which was the outcome of a historic compromise, needs to be preserved and strengthened, not weakened or made to fail. We hope that all members of the Federation can resist the temptation of, and attempts at, unilateralism. We also hope that they will relaunch a responsible political dialogue in order to continue to build today and to construct a common future. Clearly, that is in the interests of all communities that make up Bosnia and Herzegovina, just as it is in the interest of the stability of the entire region.

Mr. Rosenthal (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): We welcome Mr. Valentin Inzko, High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina. We also take note of the presentation of his report (S/2013/263, annex), which we listened to with concern owing to the lack of progress reported in the period under consideration. We would like to make five comments with regard to the report.

First, we reiterate our support for the Dayton Agreement and for the protection and preservation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We believe that it is crucially important for the political leaders and the international presence to continue to focus on observing the balance created by that Agreement and the follow-on political structures.

Secondly, with regard to my previous point, we continue to be disturbed by the pitch and level of negative rhetoric on the part of certain leaders against the Dayton Agreement and the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We are especially concerned because those words are accomopanied by efforts to undermine, and in certain cases even to disrupt, the functioning of the Federation and its institutions. In spite of the Constitutional crisisi and the stalemate in the current situation, we welcome the fact that the 2013 State budget has been adopted. We also view positively the fact that the State Council of Ministers has been able to meet regularly. Moreover, we emphasize the need to resume dialogue among political parties, especially in order to make progress on the legislative front.

Thirdly, we are concerned at the ongoing situation in Mostar, where it has not been possible to hold elections for local authorities as was done in the rest of the country on 7 October 2012, owing to the failure to implement the ruling of Bosnia and Herzegovina's Constitutional Court. We hope that the multiparty facilitation process will lead to resolving the situation and mitigating tensions. In that regard, we also hope

that that important step will be the basis for tangible progress and the transformation into a stable and democratic country.

Fourthly, it is unfortunate that, during the period covered by the report, the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina were unable to make any concrete progress with regard to the pending objectives set by the Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Council as prerequisites for the closure of the Office of the High Representative. We look forward with interest to the outcome of the Board's upcoming meetings, on 22 and 23 May. We hope that the Board will be able to come up with specific recommendations on the way ahead.

Fifthly, we recall the implementation of the ruling against Bosnia and Herzegovina of the European Court of Human Rights in the *Sejdić-Finci* case. We underscore the importance of protecting the rights of ethnic minorities, and hence the implementation of this important ruling.

The report illustrates that, however good the intentions and support of the international community, they alone will not lead to progress. In that regard, we agree with High Representative Inzko that respect for the Dayton Agreement — and in particular for the constitutional framework and the rule of law — is both a crucial prerequisite and a tool for achieving long-term stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is now up to the authorities and political parties to do their part.

Mrs. DiCarlo (United States of America): It is my pleasure to welcome High Representative Inzko back to the Security Council, and to thank him for his comprehensive briefing and his continued efforts to support the Dayton Peace Agreement.

The United States is steadfast in its commitment to the success of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and we, like our allies, have invested much in that country since the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement in 1995. As we reflect on the report presented today (S/2013/263, annex) and on the goodwill we have towards Bosnia and Herzegovina, we wish to address three points.

First, we continue to strongly support the country's aspirations to integrate into the European Union (EU) and NATO, and we had hoped that the new coalition would make those goals its top priorities. Unfortunately, politicians throughout the country seem more interested in putting their own personal political agendas above the interests of the citizens they were elected to represent. In the Federation entity, ongoing efforts to reshuffle the governing coalition have distracted from the Euro-Atlantic reform agenda. The 2009 judgement of the European Court of Human Rights in the *Sejdić-Finci* case remains unimplemented, violating the human rights of non-constituent peoples and blocking the country from applying for EU candidacy. Unless the issue is resolved soon, Bosnia and Herzegovina risks holding elections next year in violation of the judgement. And the country must still register defence properties in order to meet NATO's condition for activating the membership action plan, a process that is being obstructed by politicians in Republika Srpska. Bosnia and Herzegovina's lack of progress is all the more visible in the context of its neighbours, all of which are rapidly moving ahead towards Euro-Atlantic integration.

Secondly, it has been more than five long years since the Peace Implementation Council Steering Board adopted the five objectives and two conditions for the closure of the Office of the High Representative. The so-called "5+2" consists of issues that the Office of the High Representative is uniquely qualified and authorized to oversee, and which the political leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina could easily have completed in 2008, propelling the State on its way to EU and NATO membership. Instead, a number of political leaders have focused their energies on deconstructing or undermining Dayton and the various institutions and laws established since 1995 that Bosnia and Herzegovina needs both for the people's common good and for functioning as part of a modern Europe.

The local authorities have a legal obligation to respect the authority of the High Representative and the Dayton framework. Yet, Republika Srpska officials have persistently undermined State institutions and made statements calling into question Bosnia and Herzegovina's sovereignty and territorial integrity. In the Federation, local parties in Mostar have failed to meet their obligation to implement the Constitutional Court ruling of 10 November 2011 on the electoral system. Those actions disregard the most fundamental elements of the Bosnian Constitution and the Dayton Agreement. They must cease immediately. The continuing threats to the Dayton Peace Accords are why we continue to support the presence of the Office of the High Representative until the 5+2 criteria have been met. It is crucial that the Office continue to receive sufficient resources and political support to fulfil its

mandate under both the Dayton Peace Agreement and the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Finally, I would like to highlight the continuing importance of justice and reconciliation to long-term regional stability, particularly in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We join the High Representative in recognizing President Nikolić of Serbia for his recent public apology for the crimes committed in Srebrenica. We strongly support the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia as it continues its crucial work in bringing to justice those individuals responsible for some of the most heinous crimes of the Bosnian conflict. The January signing of a protocol on war crimes cooperation between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia is another positive development that will help ensure that locally indicted war crime suspects face justice.

Other local developments related to reconciliation, however, are more troubling. We are particularly concerned about the continued efforts to build an Orthodox church in close proximity to both an exhumed mass grave and the Potočari memorial site and cemetery, where thousands of victims of the Srebrenica genocide are laid to rest. The United States strongly supports freedom of religion, but the construction of a church in such a sensitive location, where there is no local Orthodox community, can only be interpreted as a deliberate provocation designed to deepen mistrust and fear between ethnic groups.

I again want to stress the strong commitment of the United States to seeing Bosnia and Herzegovina move beyond its troubled past towards a thriving future. We look forward to working with the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the international community to see the Dayton Peace Agreement fully implemented and the country moving irreversibly towards its Euro-Atlantic path.

Ms. Lucas (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): I join the speakers before me in thanking Mr. Valentin Inzko, High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, for his briefing and his commitment to that country.

Luxembourg associates itself with the statement to be made by the observer of the European Union.

The High Representative has painted a somewhat gloomy picture of the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The political crisis at the Federation level continues to obstruct essential reforms. The country's unity and territorial integrity are still not subject to full consensus within political circles and have been called into question in some disturbing separatist rhetoric. The country is also dealing with a difficult socioeconomic situation. In the absence of a shared vision for their country's future, Bosnia and Herzegovina's leaders have failed to launch the reforms necessary for achieving their self-imposed goals regarding European and Euro-Atlantic integration.

That said, not all the news is bad, as the High Representative notes in his forty-third report to the Security Council (S/2013/263, annex) and as he recalled this morning. We welcome the fact that the State-level Council of Ministers, which was reshuffled in November, is meeting regularly. It is also noteworthy that the State budget for 2013 was adopted on time for the first time in two years.

Moreover, we see that the security situation has remained calm and stable. Since its establishment in 2004, the European Union-led force Operation Althea has never had to intervene to restore peace, since the Bosnian authorities themselves have been able to deal with potential security threats. Against this backdrop, Operation Althea was reconfigured in September. We welcome the fact that since then the force's efforts have been chiefly focused on capacity-building and training, while retaining the means to contribute to the Bosnian authorities' capacity for deterrent.

Luxembourg welcomes the increased political presence of the European Union on the ground since September 2011 and the strengthened mandate of its Special Representative and Head of Delegation in Sarajevo, Mr. Peter Sørensen, which testify to the European Union's continued willingness to help Bosnia and Herzegovina do a better job in moving forward with its programme of reform towards stability, development and integration with the European Union.

Now that Croatia will be joining the European Union in a few weeks and relations between Serbia and Kosovo are normalizing, thanks to the dialogue facilitated by the European Union, we, like the High Representative, are concerned about the fact that Bosnia and Herzegovina is lagging behind compared with its neighbours. We take this opportunity to encourage the political leaders to overcome their differences and to implement the reforms needed for progress in the country. It is most urgent to implement the judgement of the European Court of Human Rights in the *Sejdić-Finci vs. Bosnia and Herzegovina* case

regarding the rights of minorities to be elected to the Bosnian Presidency and the House of Peoples of the Bosnian Parliament. We regret that fact that, despite the facilitation of the European Union, the political leaders did not succeed in reaching an agreement on this issue by the deadline of 11 April.

Allow me to conclude by reaffirming our profound conviction that the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a united, stable and multi-ethnic country lies steadfastly within a European context. That is, moreover, the wish of the vast majority of the Bosnian population. For its part, as a member of the European Union and an elected member of the Security Council, Luxembourg will spare no effort in encouraging the leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina to meet the aspirations of their citizens by overcoming the current stalemate and taking the decisions needed to truly take the destiny of their country into their own hands.

Mr. Iliichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We listened carefully to the statement of High Representative Inzko. His report to the Security Council (S/2013/263, annex) is informative and detailed, but unfortunately it is far from an objective analysis of the true situation in the country and suffers from bias in its criticism of the Bosnian Serbian leaders. So as to obtain a more objective idea of the situation in Bosnia and the processes there, we recommend that members of the Council also read the ninth report of Republika Srpska to the Secretary-General and the Security Council, in which the commitment of the Bosnian Serbians to international law and the spirit of Dayton is absolutely clear.

We agree that the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina continues to worsen. However, the reason for yet another crisis at the State level is hardly to be found in the rhetoric of the leaders of Republika Srpska. Of true concern is the exacerbation of antagonism between the two primary Bosnian parties. The effectiveness of the intra-Bosnian dialogue has been undermined, creating complications for the central Bosnian institutions. Indeed, the Government of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina is indeed paralysed. The recent detention of its President on charges of corruption illustrates the further exacerbation of the political crisis in the Croatian-Muslim entities against the backdrop of tensions between Bosniaks and Croatians.

We are seriously concerned by the inflammatory rhetoric of the Bosniaks. How else can we characterize allegations that Republika Srpska arose solely as a result of ethnic cleansing and war crimes? We are concerned to note a significant rise in Islamist radicalism in the Federation.

Unlike that in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the situation in Republika Srpska is on the whole stable. Its political forces continue to cooperate successfully in Bosnian affairs on the basis of an approach that upholds the Dayton Agreement and the national interests of the Bosnian Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Its Government has insisted on the need for an agreement to be reached in Bosnia and Herzegovina on reform in the country, refraining from violations of consensus, including when taking decision on political matters. Unless these principles are upheld, the existence of Bosnia and Herzegovina will be impossible.

Russia supports the territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina and hopes to see its institutions function on a sound basis, with equal footing for the three constituent peoples of the State, in line with the Dayton Agreement. One important task for the international community at this stage of the Bosnian process would be to hand over responsibility for the future of the country to the Bosnians themselves. In that regard, we advocate the abolition of the Office of the High Representative and a return to efforts to achieve agreement on the "5+2" programme set by the Peace Implementation Council Steering Board.

We are convinced that the residual issues in that framework and any other matters vital to the future of the country should be resolved by Bosnians themselves through agreement among all three constituent peoples of the Bosnia and Herzegovina: Bosniaks, Serbians and Croatians. In that context, we support the principled position regarding the inadmissibility of outside intervention in the internal negotiating process in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Any outside support to a single side would undermine the delicate political balance in the country.

We oppose a resumption of the activities of the Office of the High Representative in the European integration agenda for Bosnia and Herzegovina. The right to define their future integration and to breathe new energy into the reform process is proper to Bosnians themselves.

We caution the High Representative against using the obsolete Bonn emergency powers, which have only

exacerbated situations that were already negative in Bosnia and Herzegovina over the past year. A striking example of this was the removal in March 2011 of the procedural obstacles to the establishment of guiding bodies in the Federation without the leading Croatian parties. That is, to a large extent, the reason why the crisis remains unabated today.

We feel that decisions on key matters in the settlement of the situation should be taken on the basis of the internationally agreed format emanating from the Security Council and the Peace Implementation Council Steering Board.

There is a clear need for the Office of the High Representative to work more actively to lift sanctions imposed on Bosnian officials, primarily Serbians, due to allegations of their having assisted suspects of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. This process continues to move at a snail's pace. I recall that over the past six months, restrictions were lifted only with respect to one individual and continue to be applied to three out of approximately a dozen others.

The High Representative, together with the Steering Committee, should consider appropriate steps towards the final closure of the frozen international supervisory regime in Brčko and the Arbitral Tribunal.

As a step in the drawdown of the Office of the High Representative, we support a scaling up of the European Union mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In that context, we support a clear division of labour between the High Representative and the European Union Special Representative, and strict compliance with their mandates so as to avoid any duplication. While we do not contribute to the European Union-led force Operation Althea in Bosnia and Herzegovina, we do support its tasks of ensuring security in Bosnia and Herzegovina and training personnel of the national Ministry of Defence and armed forces.

We should like to touch specifically on the matter of international reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We support an impartial investigation of all crimes committed from 1992 to 1995. At the moment, the cases being considered before either the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia or within the Bosnia and Herzegovina judicial system are clearly biased; they tend to deal only with allegations against Serbians. We question the demonstrative disengagement of the Chief Prosecutor of The Hague Tribunal from contact with organizations of relatives of Serbian and Croatian victims of the crisis in Yugoslavia.

We attached great importance to the collective efforts to enhance the comprehensive inter-Bosian dialogue, free from outside intervention, regarding consultative options for socioeconomic and structural reform, in keeping with the Dayton Agreement and mechanisms. We recognize the importance of amending the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina following the decision of the European Court of Human Rights in the *Sejdić-Finci vs. Bosnia and Herzegovina* case. We are convinced that compromise in that respect is possible and must be sought through continued dialogue. However, we cannot agree with the broad interpretation of the views of the Court on the use of that decision as a pretext to impose a review of all of Dayton provisions.

Mr. Mehdiyev (Azerbaijan): At the outset, I would like to thank Mr. Valentin Inzko, High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, for presenting the forty-third report on the implementation of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina (S/2013/263, annex).

We note that the security situation in the country continued to remain stable. Among achievements registered during the reporting period were regular meetings of the State-level Council of Ministers, the timely adoption of the State budget for 2013, and continued cooperation with the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. We also note the efforts made to address the needs of displaced persons in the country and finding durable housing solutions for them in a more coordinated way. However, according to the report, the unfortunate dynamic — a reverse of progress and a return to the prevailing negative trends of the previous six years — continued during the reporting period. As a result, no concrete progress has been made towards meeting the outstanding objective for the closure of the Office of the High Representative.

The political consensus has been undermined by deepening divisions among political parties and the protracted power struggle at the federation and cantonal levels. We are alarmed by the continuation of direct and open challenges to the fundamentals of the Dayton Peace Agreement, including in particular the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Azerbaijan condemns divisive rhetoric advocating the dissolution of the State and any action or attempt to challenge the functionality of the State and its constitutional responsibilities. We would like to emphasize in that regard that neither the General Framework Agreement for Peace nor general international law contain any provision invoking the claimed right to self-determination for the purpose of unilateral secession from, or dissolution of, the State. Obviously, attempts to negate or challenge vital aspects of the Peace Agreement and to undermine the unity of Bosnia and Herzegovina require special attention by the international community. We agree with the High Representative that abiding by the Dayton Agreement, in particular the constitutional framework and the rule of law, is a prerequisite for long-term stability.

The economic and social situation in the country continued to weaken during the reporting period, with a decrease in exports, imports and industrial production and an increase in the foreign trade deficit and unemployment. It is therefore critical that all political factions in Bosnia and Herzegovina focus on the country's economic and development priorities. There is also a need for redoubled efforts to address and resolve long-outstanding humanitarian issues, in particular those related to property, and to ensure that the rights of returnees are fully guaranteed and implemented. We call on all parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina to engage in constructive dialogue with a view to addressing the pressing challenges, overcoming the political stalemate and strengthening the stability and unity of the country. It is also important that the Security Council and the broader international community continue to support progress towards stability and development in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the efforts of the country's political leadership to that end.

Mr. Sul Kyung-hoon (Republic of Korea): At the outset, I join others in welcoming Mr. Valentin Inzko to the Council. We appreciate his concise and pointed briefing.

We would like to offer some observations on the challenges that lie ahead for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

First, while we welcome the relatively calm and stable security environment in the country, it is disappointing that there still remain major challenges arising from the power struggle and lack of trust among political actors. The cautious optimism that prevailed early last year quickly turned into disappointment and frustration. The Government coalition, which was formed after six months of twists and turns, has proved to be short-lived. The protracted power struggle among political parties is still impeding the Government from working on pressing issues such as constitutional reform.

It is worrisome that the rule of law has been similarly undermined by political instability. The rule of law is a prerequisite for democracy and a central component of long-term peace and security. In the light of that, we remain deeply concerned that political leaders casually violate the law for their own purposes and repeatedly fail to implement the decisions of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Constitutional Court. The deadlock on the appointment of the remaining judges to the Federation Constitutional Court is also a serious source of concern. We urge all the political stakeholders to engage in constructive political dialogue and to respect the Constitution and the procedures established by the law so that the Government can fully function and perform its responsibility under the Constitution.

Secondly, Another worrisome trend is the growing open advocacy for the dissolution of Bosnia and Herzegovina. As the High Representative elaborated in his report (S/2013/263, annex), there have been distressingly high levels of provocative rhetoric from the leadership of the Republika Srpska, challenging the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Such nationalistic rhetoric will only serve to inflame ethnic tensions. We call on leaders from all parties to refrain from divisive rhetoric, which only undermines national reconciliation and the prospects for long-term stability.

The political instability in Bosnia and Herzegovina brings me to my third point, that is, the importance of national ownership. Despite years of international support, we are still witnessing a continuing political crisis, and little progress has been made on national reconciliation. I believe that that can largely be attributed to the lack of ownership on the part of political stakeholders. No democratic process is sustainable in the absence of a meaningful degree of political ownership and national reconciliation. In that vein, we would like to encourage the authorities of Bosnia-Herzegovina to further strengthen their efforts to promote the value of tolerance and inter-ethnic understanding through multi-ethnic education and confidence-building measures. Enhancing the engagement of civil society will also be crucial in ensuring accountable, responsive and democratic governance.

Civil society can play a pivotal role by holding political leaders and representatives more accountable. In that regard, the Republic of Korea encourages the High Representative to redouble his efforts to build the capacity of grassroots civil society organizations. Finally, we absolutely share with the High Representative the idea that we need to pay continuous attention to Bosnia and Herzegovina's progress, with patience and a long-term approach. In that regard, we would like to express our full support for the efforts of the High Representative.

Mr. Briens (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Valentin Inzko, High Representative for Bosnia-Herzegovina, for his briefing.

I associate myself with the statement to be made by the observer of the European Union.

The security situation on the ground has remained calm and stable — something for which Bosnia and Herzegovina's institutions have been fully responible. That has been the state of affairs for several years, and we should welcome it.

However, the succession of political crises — for months at a time at the central level, and now at the Federation level — and the continuing tension between the political representatives of communities paralyse the country and are of concern to us. Those incessant clashes divert Bosnian authorities from the goal of Euro-Atlantic integration. We particularly regret that in the light of the fact that other States of the region are about to reach historical milestones in that process or have demonstrated their ability to commit to dialogue and compromise in order to give themselves the opportunity to make progress towards the European perspective.

We therefore call once again on the Bosnian Government to undertake the reforms expected of it, first and foremost with regard to bringing the Constitution in line with the ruling of the European Court of Human Rights in the *Sejdić-Finci* case. That is a crucial element for progress towards European integration and resolving the issue of the apportionment of defence and State property. However, it is also essential to improve the functioning and effectiveness of institutions, starting with the establishment of a coordination mechanism on European issues. We remain attached to the prospect of seeing Bosnia and Herzegovina join the European Union as a united and sovereign country enjoying full territorial integrity. However, a country under trusteeship and deeply divided cannot as such belong to the European Union. It rests with the Bosnians and their leaders to find an historic compromise that would allow Bosnia and Herzegovina to develop institutions that function effectively, which clearly would not allow the prevailing exploitation of the institutional framework inherited from the Dayton Agreement.

We welcome the ongoing reconfiguration of the international presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is a harbinger of opportunity and an illustration of the leading role that the European Union can and should play in the country, in accordance with the European vision offered to Bosnia and Herzegovina. The European Union is stepping up its political, humane and financial commitment to the country. The Office of the Special Representative of the European Union has been considerably strengthened in its regional presence and the rule of law. Mr. Peter Sørensen, Special Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina and Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Bosnia and Herzegovina, enjoys our full support.

The reconfiguration of the European Union-led force Operation Althea (EUFOR Althea), resulting from a calm and stable environment, has made it possible to reduce the forces stationed there to 600 persons and to focus them on capacity-building and training. The Security Council must acknowledge that change, the nature of EUFOR Althea in the autumn, when it scrutinizes the role of the mission. EUFOR Althea still has a residual executive mandate to support the abilities of the country's authorities to maintain security as the situation may require.

The Bosnian authorities have always been able to ensure security, and therefore do not need the European military presence for that purpose, as is regularly recalled in the reports of the Operation Commander. The activities of EUFOR Althea in its drawdown phase must continue to complement those of other actors on the ground, particularly the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which has deployed its second largest mission covering a broad range of activities, such as governance, the rule of law, respect for human rights and the management of arms stocks and munitions surpluses. In that area, the OSCE should retain the leading role; a proliferation of actors would be counterproductive.

The reconfiguration of the Office of the High Representative is being considered, including by the European Union, which I would remind the Council

contributes more than 53 per cent to the budget of the Office. These considerations do not reflect a positive assessment of the political situation; quite the opposite, continuing political difficulties require us to rethink and adjust our strategy. Maintaining at any price an approach dating from the 1990s does not serve Bosnia and Herzegovina. We would like to reduce the Office to a scale consonant with its residual responsibilities by strengthening its transparency and complementary nature with the Office of the EU. The current Government crisis reminds us that it is high time to change our approach to ensure that Bosnian politicians shoulder their responsibilities. When they do, the role of the High Representative must be strictly limited to the essential core of his mission within the framework of the civil tranche of the Dayton Peace Agreement.

Mr. Tatham (United Kingdom): I would like to thank the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr. Valentin Inzko, for joining us in the Council today. I would also like to join others in our appreciation of his work and his latest report. His detailed and objective analysis of the worsening political situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina makes for sobering reading. I wish to convey the United Kingdom's support for the High Representative and his continued commitment to the implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement in that context.

The United Kingdom shares the High Representative's frustration and concern at the continuing lack of political will to deliver crucial reforms in Bosnia and Herzegovina since his last appearance before the Council (see S/PV.6860). We deeply regret that Bosnia and Herzegovina's leaders were unable to seize an important opportunity this year to make tangible progress towards joining the European Union (EU) and NATO. The United Kingdom has been a consistent supporter of Bosnia and Herzegovina's Euro-Atlantic ambitions and continues to believe that EU and NATO membership remain the strongest way to ensure the security, stability and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In July, one of Bosnia and Herzegovina's neighbours, Croatia, will join the European Union. There is a lesson here that determined and strategic commitment to the accession process and to related reforms yields results. Reform progress carries aspirant countries forward on the path of European integration. Journeys that seem long and distant in their early stages can end up being completed. But that happens only when politicians act decisively and strategically, when they commit themselves to the goal of European Union membership, and when they make sustained efforts to implement the necessary reforms. What we have seen in Bosnia and Herzegovina over the reporting period is that yet again personal and political interests have been prioritized over the needs and ambitions of ordinary citizens, leaving the country to fall farther behind its neighbours on the EU track.

We still hope that Bosnia and Herzegovina will be able to make progress towards the European Union this year and to bring its Stabilization and Association Agreement into force. But the ball is in its court. As the High Representative notes in his report (S/2013/263*), the European Union has already provided generous support to help facilitate a solution to the European Court of Human Rights Sejdić-Finci ruling, which remains the sole obstacle to Bosnia and Herzegovina's Stabilization and Association Agreement. That the political parties were unable to agree to a deal in spite of that support was deeply disappointing. Unless Bosnia and Herzegovina's governing institutions act quickly and decisively to remedy the situation and find a solution, that has all but ended their chances of submitting a credible membership application this year.

We are disappointed also by the failure to complete the registration of defence property that continues to hamper implementation of Bosnia and Herzegovina's NATO membership action plan, in spite of assurances made by party leaders to NATO Secretary-General Rasmussen during his visit in February. We urge them to fullfil their commitment to the March 2012 agreement. We share the High Representative's concern and condemnation of those in Republika Srpska who continue to advocate the dissolution of Bosnia and Herzegovina. There can be no redrawing of the map or any prospects of Bosnia and Herzegovina joining the European Union as anything other than a single sovereign State.

We are also gravely concerned by the sustained political crisis in the Federation and the continued impasse in Mostar. The ongoing disputes and associated institutional gridlock deeply discredit the political parties in the Federation entity. As the Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Council has pointed out, ensuring the functioning of institutions is not a choice. It is an obligation. We fully support the High Representative's efforts to find a local solution to these issues, and welcome his continued cooperation with

the EU Special Representative in pushing for their resolution.

There have been rare occasions this year where agreement has been found among Bosnia and Herzegovina's leaders. As the High Representative's report makes clear, the successful reshuffling of the Council of Ministers has led to regular meetings this year. The passing of the State budget on time is also to be welcomed. These incidents show that political will can be found to act in the national interest, and we must continue to actively encourage the behaviour.

But those are regrettably rare examples. Meanwhile, the social, political and economic impacts of inaction are already apparent in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We share the High Representative's concern at the deteriorating economic situation and call on Bosnia and Herzegovina's leaders to ensure that the country is well prepared to weather the economic impact of Croatian accession to the EU in July. Here again, the state of near gridlock that we have witnessed in recent months is very damaging, not just because of the signal it sends to potential investors, but also because it contributes to delay in dispersing international financial assistance for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The negative trends that the High Representative illustrates in his report reinforce our assessment that international safeguards and a strengthened EU presence continue to play an important role in ensuring security and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina. As such, the United Kingdom supports the High Representative's recommendation that the European Union Force-Operation Althea and its executive mandate be retained this year. We look forward to discussions on that matter at the October meeting of the EU Foreign Affairs Council and at the United Nations Security Council in November.

Mr. Nduhungirehe (Rwanda): I would like to thank Mr. Valentin Inzko, High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, for the comprehensive presentation of the ninth report he has submitted to the Council — the forty-third report of his Office. We particularly thank him for his work in ensuring that the Dayton Peace Agreement is fully implemented.

Let me also commend the international efforts that have for so long tried to foster peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, particularly those of the Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Council.

Mr. Inzko's ninth report presents mixed progress. We have all noted that the security situation in the country has remained calm and stable without any major incident. We commend the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina in that regard, as well as the European Union Force-Operation Althea for its valuable assistance to the Government.

We are also encouraged by the fact that the Council of Ministers met regularly and that the budget was adopted on time. We are also happy to hear that a tripartite summit will be held today among Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Turkey and hope that it will boost regional cooperation.

However, we are concerned by the current political stalemate. We note that the Government's cohesiveness and unity have been severely challenged by disagreement among the political actors, particularly within the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The stand-off has negatively impacted their own development and the fulfilment of the agenda containing five objectives and two conditions, set for the closure of the Office of the High Representative.

It is important to stress that every branch of power — particularly the Government and the Parliament — must abide by its constitutional role. It is also important that all stakeholders continue to engage in dialogue in order to dislodge the stalemate. For progress to be made, constructive dialogue among all ethnic groups, including minorities, and among the various structures in Bosnia and Herzegovina on one side, and the High Representative on the other, are critical.

Rwanda reaffirms its support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina and believes that all parties must refrain from divisive and secessionist rhetoric, which is not only in violation of the Dayton Peace Agreement but could also jeopardize the fragile reconciliation process in the country.

Let me also point out that, far from representing a handicap, the cultural differences constitute an important asset of the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Therefore, all parties and entities need to look beyond ethnic lines in order to reach greater heights, including meeting the requirements for joining the European Union.

On justice and human rights, let me be clear as the representative of Rwanda: the Srebrenica genocide is an unquestionable fact, as established by the International

Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. We therefore condemn all senior officials of Republika Srpska who deny it or defend its perpetrators. Genocide denial is not only an insult to the victims and to history, but also a serious hindrance to genuine reconciliation. However, we believe that, in order for it to be an effective tool for reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, justice must be carried out for all victims without discrimination.

Rwanda also wishes to stress that human and political rights need to be extended to the minorities. I recall that the Sejdić-Finci ruling of the European Court of Human Rights, on the right of minorities to be elected to the presidency and to the House of Peoples of the Parliament, is yet to be implemented. We therefore urge all parties to engage in dialogue on that issue, with a view to exploring constitutional reforms that could ensure equality for all in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In the same vein, we call for the implementation of the November 2010 ruling of the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina regarding the electoral system of the city of Mostar. We urge the local authorities to assume their responsibility and abide by the Dayton Peace Agreement in order to allow the people of Mostar to exercise their democratic rights.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to stress that the achievement of sustainable peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina lies with its people and its leaders. We hope that, in the near future, the Government of the country will be able to own its future with a limited international presence. We therefore call upon all parties to demonstrate political will and to implement in good faith the outstanding requirements of the "5+2" agenda, which is the only way to graduate from the monitoring of the Office of the High Representative and to ensure a better future for the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Ms. King (Australia): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this debate. I would like to join others in thanking Mr. Valentin Inzko, High Representative, for his report on the implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement (S/2013/263, annex). Mr. Inzko has brought forward a typically thorough and objective account of the continuing challenges to Bosnia and Herzegovina's progress and its European and Euro-Atlantic integration. I express Australia's strong support for him and for the work of his Office.

Australia has a close association with Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the 1990s, Australian peacekeepers served alongside their European Union (EU) and NATO counterparts to help build peace. During that period, through our humanitarian immigration programme, we were proud to receive in Australia more than 30,000 people displaced from Bosnia and Herzegovina. Today, they are valued members of our society. We are demonstrably committed to seeing Bosnia and Herzegovina consolidate itself as a stable, unified country that can provide for the needs of all of its citizens.

Seventeen years after the signing of the historic Dayton Peace Agreement, Bosnia and Herzegovina finds itself in the midst of a difficult political phase. There have been some positive recent developments. We welcome, for example, regular meetings between the Presidency and the Council of Ministers. We also welcome the fact that the 2013 State budget was adopted on time, for the first time in two years. We encourage Bosnia and Herzegovina's leaders to display the unity of purpose that will allow them to build on those achievements.

We are, however, concerned by other developments that threaten to role back the progress achieved since the mid-1990s. In particular, challenges in some quarters to the fundamentals of the Peace Agreement and the territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina risk eroding the fragile gains that have been made in nation-building.

Australia fully supports the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina. That is the fundamental pillar of the Dayton Peace Agreement that has underwritten peace and stability. It also remains critical for broader peace and stability in the Balkans. We encourage all political leaders in Bosnia and Herzegovina to respect the status of the country as an independent sovereign nation and to engage in a constructive dialogue to strengthen the Government in ways that deliver on the aspirations of the people. That is all the more important as Bosnia and Herzegovina approaches the election schedule for next year.

We also encourage political leaders to commit to constitutional reform in order to establish strong and representative State structures. Agreement on constitutional amendments to implement the European Court of Human Rights ruling in the *Sejdić-Finci* case should be an immediate priority as a strong signal that Bosnia and Herzegovina guarantees to all of its citizens

an equal stake in the country's future. It is also needed to place Bosnia and Herzegovina firmly back on the path towards its goal of European and Euro-Atlantic integration.

Australia acknowledges the fact that Bosnia and Herzegovina remains relatively safe and secure for its citizens. We share the view that stability, at present, is in no small part backed by the presence of the European Union and NATO military missions. That is another example of the role that regional organizations can and must play in securing regional stability and the importance of the Council in engaging closely with them.

Australia endorses the ongoing presence of the European Union-led peacekeeping force (EUFOR); its ongoing monitoring and reporting and arms disposal activities contribute to peace and stability every day. EUFOR will not and should not stay forever, but, for now, it remains important to sustaining confidence among communities.

So long as the remaining objectives and conditions for closure of the Office of the High Representative remain unmet, we should continue to support the efforts of the High Representative to help deliver sustainable peace and prosperity in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In a climate of fiscal constraint, we applaud the efforts of the Office of the High Representative to reduce costs. Those efforts ensure the Office's ongoing financial viability.

In conclusion, the leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina themselves have the ultimate responsibility to put their country where we all want to see it — on an irreversible path to peace and greater prosperity. To do so, we encourage them to put aside their differences and work together to implement the outstanding objectives and conditions of the 5+2 agenda. The international community, in particular the Security Council, has an important supporting role to play. We must continue to engage to help realize the goal of a stable, sovereign Bosnia and Herzegovina, at peace with itself and united in building a prosperous future for its own people.

Mr. Masood Khan (Pakistan): I join other speakers in thanking Mr. Valentin Inzko for his briefing today and for his good work as the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina. We have taken note of his report to the Security Council (S/2013/263, annex). We welcome in our midst the representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Her Excellency Ms. Mirsada Čolaković.

Pakistan is fully committed to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We support all efforts to strengthen the State at the national level while preserving the rights and prerogatives of all communal entities.

Let me start with the positive feedback given by Mr. Inzko. We are glad to know that the State-level Council of Ministers met regularly and that the budget for 2013 was adopted. The European Union and NATO military missions continue to ensure the safety and security of citizens.

The negative feedback, however, surpasses the good news. Progress on the political track is unfortunately stalled. A worsening fiscal situation, poor growth and high unemployment are compounding social problems. There is no movement towards European and Euro-Atlantic integration. The lack of progress on the implementation of the five objectives and two conditions necessary for the closure of the Office of the High Representative is an indication of the lack of commitment to the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

We commend the High Representative for offering his good offices and engaging political stakeholders to break the impasse. Pakistan is deeply concerned by the increasing challenges to the Dayton Peace Agreement and to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Republika Srpska and its leadership took several actions during the reporting period that violated the General Framework Agreement. They included the adoption of a decree to unilaterally regulate citizen identification, the non-implementation of the decisions of the Constitutional Court, and intensified rhetoric by its leadership, in particular its President, against the General Framework Agreement. His assertions for self-determination for the Serbs and his calls for the dissolution of the State of Bosnia and Herzegovina should be a matter of serious concern for the entire Council. We believe that statements such as those would not serve the interests of any community, as they would vitiate the atmosphere and undermine the prospects for long-term peaceful coexistence. Challenges to the Dayton Peace Agreement and divisive rhetoric should therefore be avoided.

The President of Republika Srpska has also continued to target the key State institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is undermining their effectiveness. The institutions that were established

to exercise responsibilities of the State under the Constitution are a cornerstone for safeguarding the rule of law, sovereignty, territorial integrity and constitutional order in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Efforts to undermine them would have an adverse impact on the long-term stability of the State.

We condemn statements by senior officials of Republika Srpska denying the genocide committed in Srebrenica in 1995, which has been confirmed by the rulings of the International Court of Justice, the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and other courts. Such statements will do serious damage to the reconciliation process inside Bosnia and Herzegovina and regionally. In that regard, we welcome the courageous and historical statement of Serbian president Tomislav Nikolić in which he offered an apology for the genocide committed in Srebrenica.

It is vitally important for all parties to recognize the international and legal frameworks for the division of power in the country. Pakistan supports all efforts to ensure a safe and secure environment in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We urge the leadership of the country to resolve their differences through dialogue. The Office of the High Representative should continue to play its role in that regard. We wish him success.

Mr. Wang Min (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank High Representative Inzko for his briefing.

China welcomes the achievements made by Bosnia and Herzegovina in promoting national reconciliation and economic development and in building the rule of law. We have also noted that Bosnia and Herzegovina still faces difficulties and challenges in attaining stability and development in the country. We hope that people of all ethnic groups in the country will focus on the welfare and long-term interests of the country, take effective measures to build mutual political confidence, promote national reconciliation, consolidate the achievements made in the political process and actively settle differences through dialogue and comprehensively implement the Dayton Peace Agreement in order to bring about greater progress in all areas.

China respects the independence, sovereignty, national unity and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We respect the choice made by its people regarding their country's future. We support ethnic groups' living in harmony and seeking common development. Maintaining peace and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina and promoting its economic and social development are in keeping with the interests of all the parties concerned.

China supports the international community in playing a constructive role and calls upon the international community to continue its support and assistance to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Meanwhile, the question of Bosnia and Herzegovina is highly complex and sensitive, as it involves not only the country itself but also peace and stability in the entire Balkan region. The international community should adopt a prudent attitude on the question and make greater efforts to hear the views and concerns of the parties involved.

China welcomes the efforts made by Mr. Inzko to promote the political process in Bosnia and Herzegovina and hopes that, based on his mandate, he will continue to play an active and constructive role in promoting the implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement. China is ready to join the international community in continuing its due contribution to achieving durable peace, stability and development in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mrs. Perceval (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): The representative of the Republic of Korea often says that I am wont to mention elements of philosophy, and, yes, that is what I studied. I think that when we think about Bosnia and Herzegovina it cannot be, as has sometimes been done, a conditioned response — we set up a model and automatically the machinery should work. We are dealing with the human, with societies, with peace. I say that with great respect because, in 1995, we saw once again in various places that, when humankind faces the horror of cruelty and death, hope also appears.

As the philosopher said, "hope is found in those who cannot find comfort". Why do I bring that up? I do so because sometimes it is very tedious to have to listen to comments that consist of nothing more than "six of one, half dozen of the other; this is good, that is bad; that was signed; elections were held" — while we forget how complicated it is to build societies, to be willing to find peace and to resist the compulsion to set up protectorates as we did in other periods in human history. We must instead be amenable to contributing so that each nation can create its own destiny.

Many colleagues have noted that steps have to be taken in order to achieve full European Union integration. Yes, undeniably, those steps must be taken to achieve full inclusion in the international community.

based on trust. However, even that must be done without imposition, but in accordance with the rhythm of the various cultures and peoples involved. We know that, as in other cases, we are dealing with inter-ethnic and intercultural communities that are not the result of nature, but of a freely made decision to agree to come together. As Mr. Inzko stated, that requires unwavering attention, patience and a long-term perspective.

I thank Mr. Inzko for his report (S/2013/263, annex). It is not always worthwhile dwelling on certain considerations, but it is always worth recalling that change cannot be imposed, but that it must be built, particularly in the context of peace and integration. In that regard, we view as encouraging news, as set out in the report, that the new Council of Ministers has held regular meetings since it was restructured in November, and that a budget has been adopted for 2013. We welcome those accomplishments, but they should be routine. We welcome them as something extraordinary, but they should be the norm if we are to have a State with working institutions. Therefore, since that first step has been taken, we hope that what is extraordinary will become the norm.

We welcome the establishment of the Working Group for Resolving State and Defence Property Issues. Like others, we note that rather than regret that the progress that began in 2011 is now slowing down, according to what we read in the reports, and returning to its negative tendencies of past years, we must seek to understand the deep-rooted causes of that stalemate and those difficulties. Rather than issuing new mandates, we should contribute and make ourselves available to ensure compliance with the Agreements that were so freely signed in Dayton.

We welcome the smooth functioning of the institutions of Republika Srpska, but we also reiterate our willingness to understand and contribute to ensuring that the open challenges launched by some leaders of Republika to the bases of the Peace Agreement and the territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and their verbal attacks on key State institutions, are not repeated. How can we contribute to that objective?

Undeniably, rhetoric denying the Srebrenica genocide, despite the rulings of the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, is particularly worrisome. Those of us from countries that have experienced such situations realize that the path of denial is that of impunity. Therefore, we call on the leadership of Republika Srpska to renew its commitment to the constitutional order, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina and to international law and human rights.

The political crisis that broke out in the Federation — starting with the vote of no confidence of the Social Democratic Party to rid the coalition Government of the Party for Democratic Action and the invocation of vital national interest — is now being analysed by the Supreme Court. The Court must decide whether or not a vital national interest was affected. We have all read the report, and I believe that this is a clear example of Mr. Inzko's assertion that party and personal interests seem to be placed above those of the common good and society. When institutions work as corporations on behalf of the vested interests of the few, they cannot in any way help to build confidence or lay the foundations for democracy and peace.

The results of the local elections in October 2012, in particular the case of Srebrenica, represent good news, even as the courts will deal with the challenges. We know elections remain to be held, for example in the city of Mostar, to elect local authorities. We hope that those elections will be held. Free elections never hurt; failure to hold elections hinders efforts to build genuine respect for the Constitution, signed agreements and social peace.

Finally, with regard to the implementation of the decision of the European Court of Human Rights in the *Sejdić-Finci* case, we regret that the deadline of 11 April established by the European Union for achieving an agreement on the necessary constitutional amendments was not observed. We call on the political leadership of Bosnia and Herzegovina to redouble its efforts to reach such an agreement.

Argentina acknowledges the work done by the Office of the High Representative in implementing the civil aspects of the Dayton Agreement, as well as its action to ensure that Government institutions can fulfil the terms of the Peace Agreement and the State Constitution. We believe that the presence of the Office is necessary to contribute to a dialogue, which cannot be ensured forever, but which we believe is always necessary.

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now make a statement in my national capacity as representative of Togo.

For my part, I should like to thank the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr. Valentin Inzko, for his six-month report (S/2013/263, annex) on the political and social situation in the country. I shall limit my statement to a few comments and observations on the political situation in the country, the state of its institutions, the reforms to be undertaken and the matter of conditions to be met for the closing of the Office of the High Representative.

Regarding the political situation, my country notes with regret the ongoing inability of the Bosnian political class to achieve a lasting political consensus on federative projects. That could explain the lack of significant progress made over the last reporting period. Indeed, the positive trend we saw in the beginning of 2012, which was welcomed during the debate held on 15 May 2012 (see S/PV.6771), seems to be losing steam.

During that debate, we had noted that following the establishment of a central Government in February 2012, after the political compromise arrived at following the general elections of October 2010, the adoption in May 2012 of a number of measures, including the national budget, the voting on the Census Law and State aid, the Bosnian political class was able to go overcome its community-based divisions so as to better tackle the consolidation of the country's unity and move forward with common interests. Unfortunately, the leaders of the country were unable to continue with that positive trend, which would have led to positive prospects for the country, in particular Euro-Atlantic integration.

My country believes that the current stalemate, even backsliding, on the political front, which is due on the one hand to the reluctance of certain actors to engage in dialogue in a spirit of compromise and, on the other, to a desire to weaken the central Bosnia and Herzegovina State, jeopardizes the implementation of the Dayton Agreement. That Agreements, as other speakers have stated, must be safeguarded and implemented in good faith so as to allow the country to make further progress.

We condemn the nationalist discourse, which could exacerbate existing political tensions among the various communities, erode central State institutions and the efforts of the international community to promote peace and stability in the country and in the region. We urge once again the leaders of the country to act with greater political responsibility by decisively committing to building a multi-ethnic, multi-confessional Bosnian State, one that upholds the rule of law.

On that last point, my country shares the concern of the High Representative that nothing can be achieved without shoring up the rule of law and respect for State institutions and their decisions. In that connection, we regret the attitude of defiance shown by some entities and individuals of the Bosnian State, which, in violation of the Dayton Agreement and the Constitution of the country, continue to take political and legal measures that go against the central institutions in areas that fall under the State of Bosnia and Herzegovina's mandate.

It is important that the Central State institutions responsible for upholding the rule of law, in particular the Constitutional Court, be respected and implemented. It is therefore unfortunate that in spite of the ruling handed down by the Court in 2011, the electoral law has yet to be implemented, which prevented the calling of elections in Mostar during the local elections held on 7 October last.

Moreover, we call on the Bosnia and Herzegovina Parliamentary Assembly to swiftly adopt the constitutional amendments that would allow non-constitutional communities to fully participate in the political life of the country.

Furthermore, given the very complex institutional organization of the country, which can only hamper its smooth running, Togo believes that it might be useful to resume the debate on the streamlining and transparency of those institutions. Here a consensual happy medium should be found between those advocate for a largely decentralized Constitution and those who would like to strengthen the Central State.

Regarding the five objectives and two conditions for the closure of the Office of the High Representative, we regret that substantive progress was not made during the reporting period. Nevertheless, we are pleased that the Office of the High Representative in Brcko put an end on 31 August 2012 to its mandate of supervision in the district, in line with the recommendations of the 23 May 2012 recommendations of the Peace Implementation Council.

We welcome also the initial steps taken by Bosnia and Herzegovina regarding the implementation of the political agreement of 9 March 2012 regarding the registration of military property as an asset of the State. We call upon the political authorities of the country

to continue their efforts to work constructively to implement the agreement without further delay.

Given the significant challenges facing the country, Togo believes that the international presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina should be maintained so as to help the country achieve a lasting political settlement that can strengthen central institutions and ensure peace in the country and in the region. However, it is the responsibility of the political leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina to take the initiative to coexist. That means that frank dialogue and compromise must be sought, as those are the only solutions that can lead to a lasting and definitive settlement of disputes.

Finally, I should like to conclude by reiterating my country's support for the efforts of the High Representative and the civilian and military personnel who are working for the implementation of the Dayton Agreement and stability in the country.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Ms. Čolaković (Bosnia and Herzegovina): Today we are witnessing a complex political and economic situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. I would like to express my sincere hope that this Security Council debate will facilitate a better understanding of the current state of affairs. Allow me to briefly present my view on the current situation along with possible future developments.

There are diverging opinions and analyses among the political actors, citizens and civil society regarding current developments in the country. Although we are witnessing a certain stalemate in the political process, we believe that additional efforts will be made to urgently find a way out of the current impasse. That is a much needed step that would certainly be beneficial to all of our citizens. That is something that everyone in Bosnia and Herzegovina expects from their political leaders and elected officials.

Bosnia and Herzegovina represents a positive example of the peacebuilding efforts of both the international community and national institutions. A stable peace has been established; the country has been functioning on a constitutional basis; and most refugees and displaced persons have recuperated their property, and many have returned to their homes. Seven general parliamentary elections have been held, the last several of which were completely organized by local authorities. The defence sector and armed forces reforms have been successfully implemented.

Moreover, we are well aware of the fact that the basic prerequisites for building a functional State and society include national reconciliation, the building of trust and putting an end to impunity for all crimes committed. That cannot be achieved without prosecuting all war criminals, regardless of their ethnicity. Even though the initial arrests of indicted war criminals were made by the international military forces, most of the others have been arrested and extradited to the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), in The Hague, by local authorities. In addition to positive cooperation with the ICTY, increasing numbers of war crimes trials are now under way in the national courts.

We have to underline that the overall security situation in the country has been calm and stable for years. As a result of the apparent progress, NATO and the European Union have both reduced the number of their troops on the ground. Having been the host country for peacekeeping operations in the past, Bosnia and Herzegovina has now become a troop contributor to United Nations peacekeeping and the NATO International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan.

I can confirm Bosnia and Herzegovina is genuinely committed to the European path, which remains an issue of the highest priority in our foreign policy. Our political leaders are pursuing dialogue with the aim of finding solutions to all open questions so that the Stabilization and Association Agreement can come into force, which would in effect enable Bosnia and Herzegovina to submit a credible application for membership of the European Union. This process is not only a major political objective, but the best way to create a legislative and institutional environment that will meet the standards for a better life for our citizens, establish favourable conditions for the development of our companies, and attract foreign direct investment.

Another foreign policy objective of high importance for Bosnia and Herzegovina is to work closely and develop intensive and good bilateral relations with all countries of the region, especially the neighbouring countries of Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro. This commitment has been evident in the recent intensive political dialogue, conducted through bilateral meetings, with Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro at the

most senior levels. A good example of such dialogue is today's meeting in Ankara. Effective cooperation among neighbouring countries is especially important on the issues of cross-border cooperation, combating organized crime, illegal trafficking and smuggling, and so on.

I believe that all our efforts will be reflected in the further enhancement of relations and the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the entire region. It is high time for all of us to turn to our joint future of European integration, political and economic prosperity, stability, mutual respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of our countries, and close, friendly cooperation among all our peoples.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Mr. Mayr-Harting.

Mr. Mayr-Harting: I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The acceding country Croatia; the candidate countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Iceland; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Albania; as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, align themselves with this statement.

I join other speakers in welcoming the High Representative, my good friend Valentin Inzko, back to the Council, and would like to reassure him of our continued support.

The lack of progress in implementing necessary political and economic reforms, the continued use of divisive rhetoric, and deeply rooted divisions among political parties continue to create considerable headwinds for the efforts of those who want to see Bosnia and Herzegovina as a united, stable, viable, multi-ethnic and prosperous State, cooperating peacefully with its neighbours and irreversibly on track towards European Union membership. We therefore encourage Council members to urge Bosnia and Herzegovina's political leadership to overcome the political stalemate and to undertake the reforms necessary to move the country forward in its European perspective.

Political deadlock in Bosnia and Herzegovina continues to burden the process of further stabilization and development. At the entity level, particularly in the Federation, the political climate remains tense and difficult. Several attempts at reshuffling the Federation Government have failed due to political and constitutional challenges. Regrettably, this struggle for political control compromises the ability of local political parties to constructively engage in important reform agendas. The stakes were raised further when Federation President Budimir was apprehended at the end of April on charges of involvement in organized crime and corruption.

There are only remote prospects for the resolution of this stalemate in the near future. Moreover, we have noted some important signs of premature pre-election positioning by the parties ahead of the October 2014 general elections. There is therefore a serious risk of a prolonged period marked by political deadlock in the Federation. This would further negatively affect an already serious economic situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is already dependent on the macrofinancial support of the International Monetary Fund and the European Union.

In Republika Srpska, the Government was reshuffled on 12 March in response to the results of municipal elections in October last year. The leadership in Banja Luka nonetheless continued to challenge the effectiveness and functionality of State structures, as well as the international presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This is unacceptable, complicates the political processes in the country, and makes it more difficult to establish sustained positive momentum.

Difficulties at the entity level are translated into the weakened ability of the State-level institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina to address in particular the fight against corruption and organized crime. They also complicate efforts to strengthen the judiciary and implement reforms in the area of defence, including the necessity to resolve the problem of unstable stockpiles of surplus arms and ammunition in the country.

The European Union has been engaged for many years in efforts to anchor Bosnia and Herzegovina on its European Union path. We believe that it is critical that Bosnia and Herzegovina fulfil as a matter of priority its obligations under the Interim Stabilization and Association Agreement. If it fails to do so, the country will not be in a position to make progress on the path towards European integration that its citizens rightly expect. In particular, Bosnia and Herzegovina needs to urgently bring its Constitution into compliance with the European Convention of Human Rights and implement the ruling of the European Court of Human Rights ruling in the *Sejdić-Finci* vs. *Bosnia and Herzegovina* case. This ruling embodies the principle of ethnic non-discrimination, which is at the core of the values

promoted by both the European Union and the United Nations. The implementation of the ruling would allow the European Union to decide on the entry into force of the Stabilization and Association Agreement with Bosnia and Herzegovina, paving the way for further steps forward, including a credible EU membership application.

A new round of European Union facilitation efforts in this regard started in early 2013 and was led by EU Special Representative and Head of Delegation Peter Sørensen and Commissioner Štefan Füle. Despite the significant time, efforts and resources devoted by the EU, political leaders in Bosnia and Herzegovina again failed to agree on a solution, leading to the cancellation of the 11 April meeting of the EU High-Level Dialogue.

Both EU High Representative Catherine Ashton and Commissioner Štefan Füle recently visited Bosnia and Herzegovina and urged its leaders to continue to seek compromise and move the country forward on its European Union path, including by implementing the ruling of the European Court of Human Rights. By not bringing its Constitution into line with European standards, Bosnia and Herzegovina risks the legitimacy and credibility of its future leaders to be selected in the 2014 general elections. High Representative Ashton and Commissioner Füle also reaffirmed once again the European Union's commitment to Bosnia and Herzegovina's European future.

Recent progress towards the European Union by the rest of the region, in particular the beginning of the normalization of relations between Serbia and Kosovo, as well as the upcoming accession of Croatia to the European Union, should help encourage progress in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well.

Since September 2011, the European Union has strengthened its political presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina in order to facilitate progress towards European integration. The single European Union presence on the ground, with a single EU Special Representative and Head of Delegation, is fully engaged in supporting Bosnia and Herzegovina in all European Union-related matters. The Eureopean Union increased its regional presence in 2012, with new offices in Mostar and Brcko and a larger office in Banja Luka. The Special Representative and Head of Delegation is also offering the EU Force Commander political guidance on military issues with a local political dimension, in particular concerning sensitive operations and relations with local authorities and with the local media.

The European Union also continues to support Bosnia and Herzegovina's progress in the security field. The overall security situation has remained calm and stable, and Bosnia and Herzegovina authorities have so far proved capable of dealing with threats to the security environment. The European Union will therefore keep the European Union Force-Operation Althea (EUFOR-Althea) focused on capacity-building and training. However, EUFOR Althea will retain an executive military role to support Bosnia and Herzegovina's efforts to maintain a safe and secure environment under a United Nations mandate. It therefore remains able to contribute to the deterrence capacity of Bosnia and Herzegovina's authorities, if the situation so requires. The European Union will also continue to provide considerable pre-accession assistance.

In the context of the overall European Union strategy for Bosnia and Herzegovina, we look forward to continuing the discussion with the international community on the reconfiguration of the international presence, in the appropriate forum. We call on the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina to meet the outstanding objectives and conditions for the closure of the Office of the High Representative.

In conclusion, the European Union reiterates its unequivocal commitment to the territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a sovereign and united country. We remain ready to provide the necessary assistance to support progress towards Bosnia and Herzegovina's European integration. It is that approach that will take the country forward on its reform agenda towards stability and development, on its path to the European Union.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Croatia.

Mr. Vilović (Croatia): At the outset, please allow me to extend my sincere congratulations to you, Mr. President, on the occasion of your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of May.

Let me also welcome to His Excellency Mr. Valentin Inzko, High Representative for the Implementation of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina, and to thank him for his briefing and his report (S/2013/263, annex).

As members have heard, Croatia also aligns itself with the statement of the European Union (EU).

The stability and prosperity of Bosnia and Herzegovina is crucial for the stability of the whole region of South-East Europe. Croatia therefore wholeheartedly supports the development of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a fully functional State for the benefit of all its citizens and strongly supports the prospect of the country's full membership in NATO and the European Union.

However, we note with regret that, despite some positive developments in the rest of the region, such as the agreement between Belgrade and Pristina and Montenegro's progress in the Euro-Atlantic integration processes, in Bosnia and Herzegovina progress has stalled in almost all areas, including the EU agenda. Since the High Representative's previous report (see S/2012/813) in November 2012, there has been no significant progress in the strengthening of institutions, the constitutional framework or the implementation of the necessary reforms.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is at a crossroads. On the one hand there is the Dayton Agreement, and on the other the ruling of the European Court of Human Rights in the *Sejdić-Finci* case. We believe that the democratic equality of all citizens and the institutional equality of the three constituent peoples are both crucial for the viability and stability of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In our view, political and national representation should not result in any form of ethnic majorization, but in a balance of individual and collective rights.

We would also like to reiterate once again Croatia's strong support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

We sincerely hope that political dialogue and readiness for compromise will yield concrete results and allow for the entry into force of the Stabilization and Association Agreement between Bosnia and Herzegovina and the European Union, which would mark an important step forward in the process of European integration and would offer Bosnia and Herzegovina an additional tool for accelerating reform processes. We hope that political elites will manage to reach an agreement, which will show that they put the interests of the country and all its citizens above the interests of their parties.

Furthermore, for Croatia, as a neighbouring country, the progress of Bosnia and Herzegovina on the path towards NATO membership is of vital importance. We therefore call on political leaders in the country to make additional efforts on the implementation of the political agreement reached by the six political parties regarding the resolution of the outstanding issue of military property, in order to enable the implementation of the first round of the action plan for NATO membership. In the meantime, the existing cooperation between Bosnia and Herzegovina and NATO should be maintained and enhanced.

The principle of the early fulfillment of conditionality, even before the process of institutional negotiations, might not be at all times fully applicable to Bosnia and Herzegovina. We support an approach that would take into consideration the still-existing need for a build-up of the necessary decision-making capacities in Bosnia-Herzegovina, taking into account its distinct complexities.

Croatia has been, and will continue to be, ready to provide all possible assistance to Bosnia and Herzegovina on its Euro-Atlantic path. Part of those efforts includes the preparation of the agreement on Euro-Atlantic partnership between Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as talks regarding the economic and other impacts of Croatia's EU membership as of 1 July.

Let me conclude by saying that the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina is first and foremost the responsibility of its people. But, at the same time, the international community needs to bear its part of responsibility with an active and sustainable engagement, which remains vital for the progress and prosperity of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Serbia.

Mr. Starčević (Serbia): At the outset, I would like to welcome His Excellency Mr. Valentin Inzko, High Representative for the Implementation of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina, and to thank him for his report to the Council (S/2013/263, annex).

My country has stable relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina and fully respects the Dayton Peace Agreement as the basis for the stability of that country and the Western Balkans region. We are committed to the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina and believe that its future should

be decided by its people and political leaders without outside interference. To that end, we shall support any agreement accepted by the two entities and three constitutive peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Serbia considers Bosnia and Herzegovina to be one of its closest partners and has a very strong interest in promoting mutual relations to the highest possible level. We are committed to developing those relations on the basis of good-neighbourliness and shall work on their promotion at the central level, as well as on the expansion and intensification of cooperation with the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the further deepening and enrichment of special relations with the Republic Srpska. Since new Governments were formed in our two countries in 2012, cooperation between us, both bilaterally and in regional organizations, has increased considerably, with concrete results that have made this recent period one of the most dynamic in our history of cooperation.

Serbia is a staunch advocate of Bosnia and Herzegovina's integration into Europe and of strengthening our mutual cooperation in that process, particularly with respect to exchanging experiences, administrative capacity-building and concrete agreements on joint approaches and ways to use the available European Union funds.

We note that the High Representative devotes a significant segment of his report to a discussion of the status and functioning of institutions in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska. We hope that the internal obstacles will be overcome and an internal agreement conducive to Bosnia and Herzegovina's continued European integration reached as soon as possible. Serbia is ready to address all outstanding issues with Bosnia and Herzegovina, which are now significantly fewer, in good faith and in our mutual interests. We particularly welcome the united position on the importance of having direct contact and exchanges of views without outside mediation.

Serbia is committed to the stability and overall development of Bosnia and Herzegovina and, for its part, has taken a number of important steps towards regional reconciliation. In March 2010, our National Assembly adopted a declaration on Srebrenica, and in an interview with Bosnian television in April, President Nikolić apologized for all crimes committed in Serbia's name and announced that he would be visiting Srebrenica to pay his respects to the victims. In that regard, Serbia firmly believes that, in the process of genuine reconciliation, all the perpetrators of crimes must be punished, regardless of which ethnic community they belong to.

We consider it particularly important that the process of refugee returns be completed and that the regional programme for dealing with the housing problems of the region's most vulnerable refugees be implemented more efficiently, without red tape or additional requests.

My country views intensive regional cooperation and a politically and economically stable region in South-East Europe as a basic precondition for its sustainable development. We are committed to strengthening regional cooperation and welcome the successful cooperation with Bosnia and Herzegovina that has been achieved through the South-East European Cooperation Process, the Regional Cooperation Council, the Central European Free Trade Agreement — of which Bosnia and Herzegovina is currently Chair-in-Office — the Central European Initiative, the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative and other forums.

The President (*spoke in French*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.